

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Julian O'Donoghue
Date of Interview	23 rd June 2011
Location	Interviewee's home, near Blarney, Co Cork
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Martin Lynch
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1953 Home County: Cork
Education	N/A
Family	Siblings: 5 brothers, 2 sisters Current Family if Different: 3 daughters
Club(s)	Blarney Hurling and Football Club [Cork]
Occupation	Carpenter
Parents' Occupation	N/A
Religion	N/A
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	N/A

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Date of Report	23 rd June 2011
Period Covered	1960s - 2011
Counties/Countries Covered	Cork, Tipperary
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Material Culture, Education, Religion, Media, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, GAA Abroad, Rivalries, Irish Language, Culture, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Alcohol, Professionalism, Food and Drink, Socialising, Relationships, Economy / Economics
Interview Summary	<p>Martin Lynch opens the interview by outlining his family's background in Gaelic games, which reaches back to the late 19th century. One of six boys, all of whom have been involved with Blarney GAA club, Lynch discusses the informality of his underage sporting experiences in the 1960s, the fortunes of Cork hurling during that decade and his memories of supporting the county team. Predominant among those memories are recollections about the size of the crowds, the conditions in the stadiums, the street sellers and tricksters, the hats worn and the food and drink consumed. In addition, Lynch discusses the physical infrastructure of the GAA in the mid Cork region in the 1960s.</p> <p>Developments on and off the field since are also covered. Lynch talks about the GAA has adapted to changes in the Blarney and become stronger as a result of its efforts to integrate newcomers to the community into the GAA. The role of the schools in games development – Lynch is schools liaison officer for the Blarney club - is also discussed, as are issues around the roles in GAA life of politics, women, rivalries and the media. Lynch recalls the highs and lows of his GAA involvement and shines a light on what he believes is the big challenges facing the GAA in the coming years – the need to provide a more regular and reliable calendar of games.</p> <p>00:01:25 Family involvement with Blarney GAA. Mentions father playing for Cork Minors in the first All-Ireland Minor final, 1928. Mentions that grandfather also played for Blarney and having medal from 1899.</p> <p>00:03:22 Mentions involvement of 5 brothers with Blarney hurling and role of brother as Secretary of Blarney club in</p>

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	<p>1960s and 70s.</p> <p>00:03:50 Talks about absence of formal training in the 1960s and beginning of competitive involvement at 14 years of age. Mentions learning the game on the road and 'up in the grove'.</p> <p>00:05:15 Refers to the manner in which informal games were organised and using jumpers for goalposts etc.</p> <p>00:05:50 Refers to the changes in hurleys, how they felt and how long they lasted.</p> <p>00:06:30 Influence of GAA – his hobby - on life. Talks about the friendships he has made, the enjoyment he derives from involvement.</p> <p>00:07:55 Refers to administrative duties he has held: underage secretary in 1971, chairman of adult club and board delegate.</p> <p>00:09:20 Recalls first attendance at inter-county game in 1962, the dominance of Tipperary, the fact that Cork was in transition and retirement of Christy Ring.</p> <p>00:10:00 Discusses the 'watershed' in Cork's hurling fortunes in 1966.</p> <p>00:10:33 Remarks on the casual organisation of Gaelic games – the absence of tickets, the lack of concern with health and safety, the smaller attendances at games compared to the 2000s.</p> <p>00:11:40 Refers to the importance of the railways to the GAA in the 1930s and 40s and increasing use of cars in the 1960s.</p> <p>00:12:20 Talks about the routine of travelling to games by train in the 1940s and 50s.</p> <p>00:12:55 Talks about the popularity of the 'meat teas' in Thurles – locals selling tea and bread with meat from their houses. Refers to the replacement of 'meat tea' signs with those for car parks.</p> <p>00:13:48 Talks about the '3 card trick' merchants.</p> <p>00:14:55 Material culture: discusses the hazards of wearing the crepe hat.</p> <p>00:15:30 Talks about musicians in towns on match days and ad hoc commentators at half time in the crowd.</p> <p>00:16:34 Describes conditions within GAA stadiums.</p>
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	<p>00:17:15 Discusses attending local matches in Coachford and recalls the number of dedicated GAA fields in mid Cork and the use of rented farmers' fields.</p> <p>00:18:50 Talks about Coachford as a venue and what made the ground different.</p> <p>00:19:44 Recalls players walking to pitch through village en route to mid Cork finals in the late 1960s, calling into church before game and being paraded through village afterwards.</p> <p>00:20:29 Talks about Blarney winning mid Cork title in 1969 and captain Neil Creedon being carried 'shoulder high' from field. Describes Creedon as the 'toughest, bets full back' he had ever seen.</p> <p>00:21:47 Discusses the 'knock-out' basis of underage competitions in the 1960s and the lack of organisation of mid Cork boards.</p> <p>00:22:45 Highlights of playing career: Selects the 1971 mid Cork Under 21 semi-final and finals. Describes games and explains why he holds them dear.</p> <p>00:25:50 Discusses 2008 Intermediate County final and describes it as 'probably the highlight of my whole life'.</p> <p>00:26:40 Discusses place of the Blarney club in the local community and considers the reasons for its healthy position. Reference is made to the traditional appeal of athletics, cycling and hunting in the area.</p> <p>(Note: interviewer, in asking the question, also refers to the organisation of soccer in Blarney)</p> <p>00:29:00 Considers the reasons for the strength of volunteerism in Blarney – refers to influence of traditional families and 'opening the doors' to new people in the village.</p> <p>00:30:13 Talks about the status of club in early 1980s and setting up new structure to improve standing of club.</p> <p>00:30:59 Efforts to integrate new members into the community.</p> <p>00:31:50 Interviewer refers to Lynch's current role as schools liaison officer.</p> <p>00:32:00 Discusses his experience of Gaelic games in school – absence of formal schools competitions and the informality of games.</p>
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	<p>00:32:45 Dominance of city-based schools and attending secondary school in the city. Refers to influence of Christian Brothers and teachers on pupils and talks about the gulf between playing the Harty Cup and playing with the club.</p> <p>00:34:50 Discusses his role as a schools liaison with Blarney GAA and the benefits it delivers to individuals and the club. Refers to contemporary focus on structured games and recreation.</p> <p>00:36:36 Compares the ability of children across the different generation. Comments favourably on skill and athleticism of today's children and questions their willingness to align to a single sport or organisation.</p> <p>00:38:15 Discussion on the skill and co-ordination of children, the influence of coaching and concerns about the sedentary life of children.</p> <p>00:41:15 Discusses his connection to Joe Bradley, his Uncle, and discusses other family connections.</p> <p>00:42:47 Recalls travelling to matches in the early 1970s with his father and later with Joe Bradley and hearing stories from the 1930s. Mention is made of Bradley's former involvement in boxing, road bowling and hurling. Mention is also made of his grandson, Joe Jordan, who won All-Ireland medal with Blarney and represented Cork.</p> <p>00:47:00 Discusses the players he had admired the most: talks about getting to know Con Murphy, former inter-county hurler, referee and GAA President, and the qualities he had.</p> <p>00:49:20 Talks about going to see Christy Ring play his last game with the Glen.</p> <p>00:50:15 Considers Ring's place in the GAA pantheon and compares him with players in previous and later generations – refers to players as far back as James Kelleher and the 1890s and up to the 1980s.</p> <p>00:52:30 Selects Cork's Ben O'Connor as the best player he had ever seen.</p> <p>00:53:35 Discusses major changes in the GAA, including the increased frequency of games.</p> <p>00:54:17 Discusses how changes in Blarney have impacted on the GAA: refers to decline of mill and the expansion of population in the 1970s and the response of the GAA club.</p> <p>00:55:44 Comments on the increased role of women in</p>
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	<p>society and the GAA.</p> <p>00:56:15 Interviewer refers to paucity of women entering the Castle Hotel in the past and the change in recent times.</p> <p>00:56:44 Martin Lynch talks about the influence of key individuals in the club – the school teacher and the parish priest – and the ongoing ‘moral support’ received from church.</p> <p>00:58:00 GAA and politics: comments on non-intrusion of party politics into GAA affairs. Refers to GAA’s role in ‘healing’ civil war divisions.</p> <p>01:00:12 Mentions that people aligned themselves to GAA for political advancement.</p> <p>01:00:30 Refers to GAA role in reconciliation in the north.</p> <p>01:01:08 Refers to ‘bitter political opponents’ working together in Blarney GAA club.</p> <p>01:01:27 Disappointments: comments on the GAA’s ‘higher authorities’ at county and national level distancing themselves from clubs. Warns of the dangers of those who hold administrative office too long.</p> <p>01:03:15 Offers criticism of the marketing of Gaelic games and suggests ways it might be improved – including more provision for families.</p> <p>01:05:13 Comments on his own experience of fanatic Irish teachers and the impact it had on his attitude to the language.</p> <p>01:06:19 Describes the GAA role in the Irish language as an ‘insulting token’.</p> <p>01:07:15 Discussion around the future of the Irish language , the absence of a social outlet, the role of gaelscoileanna etc.</p> <p>01:9:29 Discusses club rivalries in general, in particular the Blarney club rivalry with Inniscarra and the level of social interaction between the members of the two clubs, including working together in the mill.</p> <p>01:14:35 Comments on the importance of volunteers and the payment of managers.</p> <p>01:15:25 Discusses his frustration of being involved with teams and impact of county team managers on club schedules. Describes it as the ‘biggest problem’.</p> <p>01:16:44 Refers to daughter’s boyfriends involvement with the</p>
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	<p>GAA in London and the support it provides.</p> <p>01:17:16 Reflects on media coverage of the GAA and offers criticism of their focus on the negatives. Contrast treatment of GAA and rugby.</p> <p>01:18:34 Comments on the high profile at national level of players and the low profile at local level.</p> <p>01:19:06 Challenges for GAA: proper fixture plan and regular games for club players.</p> <p>01:19:45 Talks about providing administrators with a proper brief to see if they can provide the time and commitment. Emphasises the importance of rotating officers in clubs.</p> <p>01:22:08 Final comments: stresses the importance of enjoyment, the avoidance of work-like 'drudgery' and outlines what he believes should be the shared goal of all members.</p>
Involvement in GAA	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Manager <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coach <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steward</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____</p>
Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)	Played for 20 years or more. O'Callaghan Cup medal, u21 Cork hurling
Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)	Chairman of club, Secretary, Delegate, Divisional Chairman
Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 0:1:23:00
Language	English

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To be filled in by Interviewer:

I hereby assign the copyright of the content of the above to the GAA Oral History Project on the understanding that the content will not be used in a derogatory manner. I understand that I am giving the GAA Oral History Project the right to use and make available to the public the content of this interview.

Signed: Julian O'Donoghue

Date: 23rd June 2011